

is an important——

The President. I think it's going to fit, don't you? That's great.

Mrs. Hatton. Thank you so much, Mr. President.

The President. I'm proud of you.

Mrs. Hatton. And I'm proud of you. Great things happen to great people.

The President. Thank you.

Meetings With Members of Congress

Q. Mr. President, are you building incentives to help the economy and working with Congress? Are you getting momentum having all these meetings with the Hill, with Chairman Greenspan?

The President. Well, I think so. You know, we've got a lot more meetings ahead. I'm going to have a huge number of meetings, I hope, next week with Members. I needed this first week just to kind of get our feet on the ground here and get organized and get ready. But I have held a lot of meetings with Congress, and I'll do many more next week. I'll do as many as I can leading up to the February 17 address to the joint session. And after that I'll do as many more as I can.

Homosexuals in the Military

Q. Mr. President, are you confident that you'll ever get the ban on gays in the military lifted?

The President. Well, we're working on the resolution in the Senate, as you know. And I've been working mostly on economic issues today, so I just heard from my staff. But they seem to think we're pretty close to——

Q. Are you satisfied with 6 months down the road?

The President. I'm satisfied with what I hope the resolution will be. You'll have to come back to me when there's final language there.

I think the Joint Chiefs should have 6 months to deal with the practical issues involved. This is not free of difficulty. There are certain factual problems involved.

But the principle—let me answer the question Mark [Mark Halperin, ABC News] asked me this morning about the principle. The principle behind this for me is that Americans who are willing to conform to the requirements of conduct within the military services, in my judgment, should be able to serve in the military and that people should be disqualified from serving in the military based on something they do, not based on who they are. That is the elemental principle.

There is actually an enormous amount of agreement on this. The Joint Chiefs agree, for example, that we should not anymore ask people about their sexual orientation when they enlist. And I believe that any sort of improper conduct should result in severance. The narrow issue on which there is disagreement is whether people should be able to say that they're homosexual—and do nothing else—without being severed. But there are a whole lot of very complicated practical questions that flow from that very narrow issue. And that's what I want to have 6 months to give them a chance to work on. So, I hope we can.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:50 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Meeting With Representatives of the Close-Up Foundation

January 29, 1993

Homosexuals in the Military

Q. Mr. President, when are you going to announce your policy on gays in the military? What time today?

The President. Well, we're waiting for an analysis of the court decision now and how it affects what we would have to do anyway. So, that sort of—we were here, as you know, last night

with Senator Nunn, and I thought it was quite close to an agreement that would give the military what I think ought to be done without anybody agreeing to change their position now—give them a chance to look into what the practical problems are. But this court decision may change that, and we are looking at it. And I will probably have something to say later today.

Q. But do you—[inaudible]—decision because—[inaudible]—get through now?

The President. Well, we talked about it a little last night, but I wanted to—the staff stayed here quite late. I thought they ought to get a chance to get a little sleep and then think through it. So, as you know, there is virtual agreement on everything but one issue anyway. So, you are trying to figure out how this court case fits, that and whether it changes anything for either side.

So, we'll talk about it this morning and then try to resolve it soon.

Q. Are you concerned, Mr. President, that this controversy this week has given the Amer-

ican people the wrong idea of what your priorities are?

The President. Yes, I do. Of course, I didn't bring it up; people in the Senate did. I just tried—I have not, frankly, spent very much time on it compared to the time I'm spending on the economy, which is what I was elected to do. And we've been working on that hard. So, I'm just going to keep doing what I was elected to do and try to stick up for what I believe and see if we can work through this.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:37 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Teleconference Remarks on Family and Medical Leave Legislation January 29, 1993

The President. Thank you very much, Al. And hello, ladies and gentlemen. I want to thank you for agreeing to join us on this telephone call today and through this telephone call to speak to the people in your own State and throughout the United States.

One of the things that we are determined to do here in Washington is open the Government to you and never let people forget, who are here making decisions, that you and lives are at stake and that these matters that we discuss and vote upon here really do affect real people out in our country.

So with that, let me just now go from one person to the next and let each of you say something about how this family and medical leave act might affect your life in the future or could have affected your life in the past or the fact that we didn't have it affected you.

[At this point, the President took a series of telephone calls from people who described their personal experiences.]

The President. Ladies and gentlemen, I know I speak for Vice President Gore when I thank all of you for your courage and your support

on behalf of your own children and your own families and working families all across this country. We believe that next week, the Congress and the leaders who have worked on this in both parties will help our Nation join the 72 other countries who already have family and medical leave. And if it happens, it will be because of people like you and for people like you.

I think a lot of you said this, but I just want to close with this: It's easy for people to talk about family values, but it's also important for us to value families. And your Government is going to be given a chance to value the American family next week. We hope and pray they'll do it. And if it does happen, you all can claim a lot of the credit.

Thank you so much for being with us today, and have a wonderful time. And keep those kids making that good noise. I like to hear it.

Bless you all. Goodbye.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 11:42 a.m. from the Oval Office at the White House. He was introduced by the Vice President.